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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

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83rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 31 May 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Terrorist attacks worldwide

The President: Before moving to the first item on our agenda today, on behalf of the General Assembly I would like to express sincere condolences to the families and compatriots of all those who lost their lives in terrorist attacks over recent days. This morning's attack in Kabul and yesterday's attack in Baghdad come on the heels of the attack in Manchester just last week. Those attacks are a sharp reminder to us all of the need for the international community to do all in its power to prevent violent extremism and combat terrorism.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-second session

The President: I now invite members, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-second session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session should be elected from among the Eastern European States.

In this connection, I have been advised that the Chair of the Eastern European States Group for the month of November 2016 has informed the Secretariat that the Group has endorsed His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, for the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, I therefore declare His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia elected by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

On behalf of the Assembly, I wholeheartedly congratulate His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

I would like to say a few words of congratulations. As a three-term Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, having served the United Nations and the European Union in a number of senior conflict prevention, resolution and mediation roles, and having worked previously as a career diplomat, Minister Lajčák brings a dedicated work ethic and an unwavering commitment to multilateralism and a wealth of experience to the role. Without a doubt, those skills will serve him and the United Nations well over the coming session.

Minister Lajčák will assume the presidency of the General Assembly on 12 September, at a critical time for the United Nations and the international community. With the world facing global challenges on a massive scale, including cycles of conflict and relapse, the largest refugee and humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, the spread of terrorism and the destructive

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impacts of climate change, the General Assembly has a critical role to play in setting the stage for sustaining peace and achieving sustainable development.

In recent times, I have had the honour of meeting Minister Lajčák on several occasions, and I have been struck by his commitment to forging a United Nations fit for the twenty-first century. The United Nations is an organization that serves the people, is based on ethics and transparency and promotes human rights and the rule of law. I am confident that during the seventy-second session, under Minister Lajčák's leadership, the United Nations will stay the course on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In the months ahead, I will continue the close collaboration already begun with Minister Lajčák and his team to ensure continuity in the work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary committees. I am confident we will achieve a smooth transition between our presidencies and that his team will hit the ground running in September.

The General Assembly has today elected a dedicated and able President for its seventy-second session. I congratulate Minister Lajčák on his election and wish him the very best for the session ahead. I now invite him to take the floor.

Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia): Before I begin, I would like to join and support the statement of President Thomson, in condemning — in the strongest terms — the horrible attack in Kabul. There is no justification for such horrific violence.

First of all, I would like to thank the General Assembly. I am truly delighted to be elected as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. It is my greatest honour to have earned the support of the Assembly, and I feel truly privileged to have the opportunity to serve it throughout the upcoming session.

I have been a professional diplomat all my life, serving both Slovakia and the international community with passion and commitment. I have always believed in respect, honesty and dignity, rules, dialogue and the search for compromise. Over the course of my career, I have been fortunate to meet many of the representatives gathered here. Thus, earning the Assembly's trust today means that I am taking on not only a professional, but also a personal responsibility.

It is the first time that Slovakia has been entrusted with this role. I am very grateful for the support at home from the President, the Government and the people. My country has always been firmly committed to multilateralism, with the United Nations at the centre. And over the years, we have contributed to a wide range of United Nations activities through work in the main United Nations organs, participation in peacekeeping operations or delivery of humanitarian and development assistance.

During my tenure, I want to pay due attention to all three United Nations pillars, and I intend to work on the following six priorities.

First of all, I ask that Member States focus on people in striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. I believe we can do more to bring the United Nations closer to the world's citizens. Nations around the globe continue to have high hopes for the United Nations. It is a key task for the General Assembly, as the most representative organ, to step up its efforts. It should make a real difference in the lives of ordinary people.

Secondly, I wish to highlight the importance of prevention and mediation in sustaining peace. I share that priority with Secretary-General Guterres, as I have always been a strong proponent of preventive diplomacy. Past efforts and existing United Nations opportunities on sustaining peace will be addressed at the already mandated high-level meeting in April 2018.

Thirdly, I want to focus on migration. The consultative process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will shift into intergovernmental negotiations. Migration is not a short-term seasonal or regional problem. It is a very complex global and generational issue that demands worldwide attention.

Fourthly, I will also take a closer look at the Sustainable Development Goals and climate. We need to maintain the political momentum. I will follow up on the work of President Thomson and support Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed in their efforts. More should be done to address inequalities and explore ways to help least developed countries and small island developing States. I feel encouraged by the commitments of Member States and the current leadership of this organ in that regard. Activities such as next week's conference on oceans are steps in the right direction, in terms of both substance and timing.

Fifthly, the overarching principle of the respect for human rights will guide my work. There can be no peace and development without respect for dignity and fundamental rights. Thus, I will continue to promote equality, including equal opportunities for men and women, as a top priority. The principle of equal representation will also be reflected in the composition of my team. In that regard, I will be actively participating in that dialogue. I strongly wish to achieve both gender and geographical balance in the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

The sixth priority is quality, especially in terms of mandated events. I will not bring any new initiatives that may put an additional burden mainly on smaller States. I would, rather, like to see the agenda in clusters and streamlined with concrete results.

The presidency of the General Assembly is an increasingly demanding position. In preparing for my post, I consulted broadly with Member States and other stakeholders. It is our common goal to create a stronger United Nations that is able to better meet all the expectations. I will facilitate a constructive, informed and open interaction among Member States and with the Secretary-General. I stand ready to consult his reform initiatives in the area of peace and security, development and management.

In search of a deeper change for our Organization, we must strengthen the trust between the United Nations and the membership, as well as the major groups. Many Member States feel that we need tangible progress on the United Nations reform agenda and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. I will do all I can to support this effort.

It is vital to make further strides towards improving the efficiency and role of the General Assembly. I share the view that this is both a technical and a political issue. By far, the most widely mentioned United Nations reform topic is the reform of the Security Council. There is a high degree of accord that the time is ripe to transform the Security Council into a twenty-first century body. I intend to work closely and consult widely with Member States on how to push forward the agreement our leaders made at the 2005 World Summit.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for being here with us today. It is not an easy time to be heading the world's leading international Organization. His steadfast commitment in taking the United Nations mandate forward is very much appreciated and needed.

I wish to express my special gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your outstanding cooperation, advice and guidance. You are a committed leader in many areas, but especially on the promotion of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Your dedication to strengthening the continuity and the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly has been exceptional. You and everyone on your team have been so helpful in getting ready for my presidency. Without your generosity and goodwill the transition would be much more complicated. Until September, let me assure you, Sir, of my firm support to your ongoing efforts.

I wish to thank Member States once again for the opportunity to serve them. I will do my utmost to represent them to the best of my abilities. I look forward to collaborating closely with all of them, very much focusing on pragmatic and practical issues. I pledge to represent each country as an honest broker in a fair and open manner, and I want all Member States to have a sense of belonging and equal relevance.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President-elect of the General Assembly.

At this juncture, I would like to advise Member States that there will be an opportunity, following the adjournment of this meeting, for representatives to extend their congratulations to the President-elect in the Indonesian Lounge immediately following the adjournment of this meeting.

It is now my honour to give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I am honoured to be here for the election of the new President of the General Assembly, but let me first say what a privilege it is to work with you, Mr. President, dear Peter Thomson. I am deeply grateful for your leadership over the past year and am looking forward to continuing our partnership in the months to come. You still have a long way to go. You have guided the Assembly outstandingly well during the transition from one Secretary-General to the next, and you have fully supported my efforts to sharpen our focus on prevention, achieve reform and better serve the peoples of the world. Your very strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and your enthusiastic leadership in relation to the Ocean Conference represent a legacy that will never be forgotten in the United Nations. On top of all that,

you are creating a very solid friendship that I will also never forget.

I warmly congratulate Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I had the good fortune to get to know him as we each presented our vision for the United Nations to the Member States last year.

Foreign Minister Lajčák has always demonstrated an impressive command of all aspects of United Nations action and a strong commitment to the principles that govern our work. He has expressed his firm belief that strengthening the United Nations is the best investment to achieve the universal desire for peace, development, equality and justice in the world. I think that both of us saw high expectations and got a strong sense of how much Governments and peoples need the United Nations to respond to the cries of people around the world, who deserve lasting peace, justice, human rights and human dignity.

As we prepare for a busy and meaningful next session of the General Assembly, I look forward to collaborating with its new President in charting a course to a better future.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for those remarks, in particular the kind remarks he made towards me.

It is my privilege to give the floor first to the representative of Cameroon, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Mana (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Group of African States, I commend Secretary-General António Guterres and you, Mr. President, for the efforts undertaken during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. I would also like to extend our warmest congratulations to the President-elect of the seventy-second session, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák.

Africa welcomes the election of the President-elect because our continent is driven by the conviction that he will build upon our common initiatives in order to find solutions not only to the issues faced by the entire planet, but also to the specific challenges faced by Africa. Those challenges include development financing, promoting sustainable development, implementing the commitments agreed upon by the international community to combat the effects of climate change, addressing immigration and migr galvanizing support for African efforts to ensure p and stability on the continent and promoting refo the Organization, in particular reform of the Sec Council, in order to rectify the historic inju Africa faces.

We believe that the consensus on the Presi elect, his vast experience, as described by the Pres of the General Assembly and the Secretary-Ge and his readiness to serve at the various levels o Organization attest to his commitment and bode we a successful mandate. Africa counts on the Presi elect to ensure that the continent's priorities will be into consideration. Under his presidency, Africa h that its voice will be heard and increasingly heede

(*spoke in English*)

In my national capacity, allow me to assur President-elect that the delegation of Came will provide him with the necessary support fo action he takes, as Cameroon will be one of th Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its sev second session.

The President: I now give the floor to representative of the Marshall Islands, who will s on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): On behalf o Government, I offer sincere condolences to all affected by yesterday's tragic bombing in Kabul.

As Chair of the Asia-Pacific Group of State the month of May, I have the honour and priv to address the General Assembly today on beha the Group with words of gratitude for entrusting Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák with the hono being the President-elect of the General Assembly behalf of the Group, I extend my sincere congratula to His Excellency Mr. Lajčák on his election to s prominent post.

The stewardship of the President of the Ge Assembly is of crucial importance to addressing of the challenges facing the United Nations. W confident that, based on his professional qualities vast experience in the United Nations arena, inclu his service as Minister for Foreign Affairs and fo Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia, the Presi elect will make significant contributions to the su of the upcoming session of the General Assembl particular, his early engagement of regional grou

the United Nations already demonstrates the importance of inclusive participation.

Let me also express my sincere gratitude to President Thomson for the excellent work and leadership he has provided so far and wish him well in the next few months of his continuing presidency of the seventy-first session. I would like to commend the initiatives taken so far by President Thomson, including outcomes on peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and governance of the United Nations. It should also be noted that President Thomson has played an invaluable role in multiple action events regarding implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including building sustainable peace for all, climate change, financing, innovation and the upcoming high-level Sustainable Development Goal events on oceans and education.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would like to pledge our full support to the President-elect and wish him every success in carrying out his duties during the seventy-second session. Many challenges undoubtedly lie ahead. But together, with the cooperation of all States Members of the United Nations and the leadership of Mr. Lajčák and Secretary-General Guterres, we can continue working to ensure a more effective and efficient United Nations that is fit for purpose and that will make the world a safer, just and more prosperous place for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Winid (Poland): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, it is my honour and pleasure to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Minister Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Minister Lajčák brings to that position a wealth of experience gained during his distinguished career in the diplomatic service, both of his own country and in international institutions. Since 2012, he has been successfully serving as the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. We are confident that Minister Lajčák will utilize his many years of practical experience, coupled with extensive managerial skills, when he takes up the new challenge of leading the General Assembly during its seventy-second session.

At the next session, we will have to meet ambitious goals. A number of intergovernmental multi-stakeholder and reform processes will continue and will require the leadership of the President of the General Assembly and constructive political dialogue among Member States. We strongly believe that Minister Lajčák will significantly contribute to the successful outcome of the upcoming General Assembly session. We have great expectations for progress to be made in many areas and welcome Minister Lajčák's set of clearly outlined priorities that will help us in conducting our work.

On behalf of the Eastern European Group, I would also like to express our gratitude to President Peter Thomson of Fiji for his remarkable efforts during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. Over the past few months, you, Sir, have led the complex work of this body in an excellent manner, focusing first of all on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, we commend your commitment to facilitating a smooth transition and a strong start for the new Secretary-General. We also appreciate your active engagement in United Nations reform, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and Security Council reform. We also take this opportunity to declare our strong commitment to the success of the upcoming Ocean Conference and highly commend your leadership in the preparation process.

Sir, you can count on the support of the Eastern European Group until the end of your tenure as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We hope that your highly beneficial engagement with the United Nations will continue in future, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the full support of the States members of the Eastern European Group for the newly elected President of the General Assembly, Minister Miroslav Lajčák, during his upcoming tenure. We wish him success in fulfilling his demanding mandate.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), over which the Republic of Haiti has the honour to preside, let me say that I am particularly pleased to extend my warmest welcome to the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, as he readies himself to assume the high office with whose functions the peoples of the United Nations have just entrusted him.

GRULAC welcomes his election to the presidency of the General Assembly with joy and enthusiasm.

More than just a simple matter of protocol, his presence here today is clear testimony of the importance attached to all regional groups that make up our Assembly. It is also a recognition of their well-known contribution to the work of the General Assembly. The President-elect may be assured of the full support of GRULAC in the coming year.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to you, Ambassador Peter Thomson. As Mr. Miroslav Lajčák's predecessor, during your term of office you have worked with conviction and unanimously recognized determination to advance the cause of peace, human rights and sustainable development. I extend to you GRULAC's gratitude for the fact that you always take the high road, your welcome initiatives and your remarkable contributions to the work of the Assembly.

The President-elect will be taking up his post at a particularly difficult time at which we are seeing an increase in international tensions and the proliferation of ever more complex and diffuse threats. We are also seeing problems of a transborder nature, be it the tragedy facing migrants and refugees, the degradation of our environment or the North-South divide, which has left a significant swathe of our humankind languishing in poverty.

Everyone agrees that there is a need for a new impetus and fresh momentum in international action so as to ensure strong and effective responses that are commensurate with the challenges and expectations of the community of nations. In this aspiration for revitalization, the General Assembly no doubt has a major role to play, along with the other principal organs of the United Nations, to make the Organization the crucible of a new international order, in a stronger spirit of solidarity, that is more just and is based on the rule of law, dialogue and collective responsibility.

We are aware of the President-elect's commitment to these values and ideals. He is a diplomat, an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Special Representative and lead negotiator of the European Union on various issues of major importance. As Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, throughout his brilliant career he has been a key player in many struggles to bring about international peace and security and ensure respect for human rights.

He is therefore particularly well prepared to take up the functions of President of the General Assembly. He brings to this position a vast experience of the world and the corridors of international diplomacy, as well as first-hand knowledge of issues concerning assistance to countries emerging from conflict and of the processes of reconciliation, national reconstruction and peacebuilding. These are all precious assets that he will bring to his term of office.

We are certain that in this position of heavy responsibility, he will continue to display his outstanding qualities, his energy and his well-known talent to inspire and promote the agenda of the General Assembly, so that the United Nations as a whole can more effectively meet the challenges of stability, peace, security, growth and economic development at the regional and global levels.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are facing challenges and problems whose character and scope are all too familiar to us: migration, organized crime, global warming, debt unsustainability and, more importantly, our fight against poverty. We are aware of the importance that he attaches to these issues: to support for political processes and post-conflict reconstruction, to the strengthening of the nexus between security and development, to eliminating poverty and to the need to tackle the root causes of crises, not only their symptoms.

The President-elect has said that the United Nations must remain not only the main forum for discussing new global threats and challenges as well as defining lines of action, but also an important partner for countries in the areas of development, peace, security and human rights. That is what he said during an interview with *Time* magazine. I assure the President-elect that these remarks will be strongly echoed by GRULAC.

We share his faith in multilateralism, his vision of a world governed by international law and his ambition to see the General Assembly fully assume its role in achieving an order of greater peace and solidarity. In particular, we hope that under the presidency of Mr. Lajčák, the General Assembly will breathe new life into its work, which is so necessary for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The President-elect can count on the support of GRULAC, which will always stand with him in his efforts to ensure that the General Assembly has a higher profile and fulfils its agenda. It is in this spirit that I am pleased to convey to him, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, our heartfelt wishes for a successful term of office and for every success in carrying out the work of the General Assembly under his presidency.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

As the current Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, he brings to the office and impressive and distinguished career in Government and diplomacy. His extensive experience working for his country's diplomatic service, helping to establish the European External Action Service, mediating the post-conflict crisis in the Western Balkans and assisting in the transformation of his country provide him with deep insight into conflict resolution and conflict prevention, which is required today more than ever.

We welcome his commitment to continuing the reform of the United Nations, as well as his focus on peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, and look forward to his contributions in these areas. We know that he will guide the General Assembly wisely in its seventy-second session, where further progress on sustaining peace, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the reforms of the United Nations and the compact for refugees and migrants will be among the core subjects.

We wish the President-elect every success, and he can rely on the full support of the Western European and Other States Group. At the same time, we would also like to express to you, Mr. President, our deep appreciation for your excellent work throughout the current session of the General Assembly. Your commitment and leadership, in particular your emphasis on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, has helped to focus our joint efforts to ensure progress. We welcome your leadership in guiding the General Assembly as we address issues of climate change, including through international instruments and forthcoming conferences. Your tireless work to promote the 2030 Agenda within and outside the United Nations has contributed to building global momentum towards its implementation, and we look forward to working with you, Sir, during the remaining month of your term in office.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Today is a wonderful day. We have the chance to congratulate our new President-elect, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and we also have the opportunity to thank President Thomson for the great work he has done over the past year in bringing peace and security around the world.

The United States wants to be as engaged as possible in the United Nations, but we want to do it in a way that ensures that we are bringing efficiency, effectiveness and reliability to what the United Nations does. We feel that at this time there are a lot of challenges in the world, but also many opportunities.

If we band together, if we work together, we can rid the world of such terrible, cowardly acts as those committed in Kabul against our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. We can make sure that we deal with migration and refugees so that they can live with dignity. We can focus on human rights and making sure that we are treating all people as if they are God's children. We can also make sure that we are focused on how we are going to continue to transition as we go through these challenges into making them great opportunities. We can eliminate the sexual exploitation that we are seeing in peacekeeping missions. We can make those peacekeeping missions smarter instead of working harder. All of these things we know we can do, but we need to do them together.

We certainly look forward to President-elect Lajčák's leadership. I want him to know that the United States will stand with him as a partner to support him in every possible way we can. The seventy-second session of the General Assembly is going to be an important one. It is going to be one that has many actions, but we know that if we stand together, it is going to be a very successful one.

The President: At this juncture, I would like to remind members that, in accordance with resolution

70/305, of 13 September 2016, the President-elect of the General Assembly will take an oath of office at the moment of handing over the gavel in the final plenary meeting of the seventy-first session.

I would also like to repeat that there will be an opportunity for representatives to extend their congratulations to the President-elect in the Indonesian Lounge, immediately following the adjournment of this meeting.

We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the seventy-second regular session

The President: As announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventy-second session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the States members of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name has been drawn will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by lot by the Secretary-General, the Czech Republic was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventy-second session.

Agenda item 6

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the seventy-second session

The President: I should now like to consult members with a view to proceeding to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly,

> "The Vice-Presidents shall be elected after the election of the Chairmen of the six Main Committees referred to in rule 98, in such as way as to ensure the representative character of the General Committee".

It is my understanding that, since the elections of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will conform with decision 68/505, of 1 October 2013, on the "Interim arrangement on the pattern for the rotation of the chairs of the Main Committees of the General Assembly", it will not have an impact on the geographical distribution of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the representative character of the General Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly therefore agrees to proceed to elect the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session shall be elected according to the following pattern: six representatives from African States, five representatives from Asia-Pacific States, three representatives from Latin American and Caribbean States; two representatives from Western European and other States; and five representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council.

I would now like to make a personal note from the Chair. I note that of the 16 nominations submitted by the regional groups, only two are female. In the light of our ongoing discussions regarding gender parity at the senior levels of the United Nations, I find that regrettable. In addition, I note that none of the nominations for the Committee Chairs is female. I therefore use this occasion to encourage regional groups again to consider what steps they can take in making nominations in the future to advance gender equality at the United Nations.

In accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly by secret ballot will be dispensed with when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

We shall proceed accordingly.

I shall now read out the names on the slate of candidates:

African States:

Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco and Zimbabwe

Asia-Pacific States:

Afghanistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu

Latin American and Caribbean States:

Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile and Guatemala

Western European and other States:

Finland and Israel

Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, I declare those candidates elected, in addition to the five representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The following States have therefore been elected to vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for the seventy-second session: Afghanistan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, China, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Israel, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the States that have just been elected Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by strongly condemning the recent terrorist attacks in Manchester, Baghdad and Kabul. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the Government and the people of those countries.

We have asked for the floor to place on the record our position on the election of the Israeli regime as Vice-President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We think that the Israeli regime in no way qualifies for that position. Allow me to briefly explain why.

For decades, the United Nations has time and again condemned Israel for its illegal occupation of the land of Palestine and other countries of the region and its flagrant violations of the norms of international law. For decades, Israel has insistently violated the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Numerous resolutions have been adopted in the General Assembly and other United Nations organs, deploring the criminal acts of Israel and demanding their immediate end. Israel's response to all of those legitimate demands has always been the same — denial and defiance. Israel has been deaf, but not mute. It has repeatedly attacked the United Nations and its Member States in a sinister way for their defence of the Palestinian people and for rightly criticizing the Israeli regime. Instead of changing course, Israel has repeatedly accused the United Nations and its organs, including the Assembly, of being anti-Semitic, biased and partial.

As such, bestowing a vice-presidency of the General Assembly on Israel will serve neither the principles of the United Nations Charter nor the work of the Assembly. Israel is no friend of the United Nations and therefore does not qualify for such a position in the most important organ of the United Nations, which it consistently slams. We therefore disassociate from the decision to elect Israel as Vice-President of the General Assembly.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States and in my capacity as its Chair for this month, we would like to express the Arab Group's reservation about Israel's candidature to serve as Vice-President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. That position requires respect for United Nations resolutions, whereas Israel violates those resolutions in an ongoing manner and views itself as being above United Nations resolutions. We believe that accepting Israel's participation in all international bodies, including the United Nations, requires respect for both the Charter of the United Nations, international law and legitimate international resolutions calling for an end to the occupation since 1967 of all Arab territories, on the basis of the Arab Initiative. Israel also needs to acknowledge the right of the Arab people, including the Palestinian people, to self-determination and respect their independence. The Palestinians suffer as a result of Israeli occupation, including of East Jerusalem.

Hence, the Arab Group would like to voice its reservations on Israel's candidature for that position.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to register our strong objection to Israel's candidature for the role of

Vice-President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

At the outset, I recall that the nomination of Israel to that post by the Group of Western European States was no accident but rather part of systematized policy to project Israel, the occupying Power, as a key player in the work of the United Nations, just as was done in recent years in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Committees, especially in the light of the short political memory of some Member States with respect to Israel.

All Security Council resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict refer to Israel as an occupying Power, and its candidature to any entity of the United Nations is in itself counter to international law and violates the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. How, then, can that not run true for this post?

The General Assembly is a global Parliament that enacts international resolutions. This organ seeks to attain the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter. If Israel were to assume the position of Vice-President, that would be at odds with those goals and with resolution 273 (III) of 1949, which sets the terms for admitting Israel to membership in the United Nations, namely by complying with resolution 181 (II) of 1947, establishing the State of Palestine, as well as with resolution 194 (III) of 1948, calling for the return of Palestinian refugees.

Since Israel has implemented none of these and other resolutions of international legitimacy, and has refused to end its occupation of the occupied territories, it is not entitled to assume any position at the United Nations prior to having implemented the resolutions of international legitimacy and to putting an end to its occupation of Arab occupied lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan, that have endured occupation for over 50 years. Israel must end its violations of international law and principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I wish to inform members that, immediately after the adjournment of this meeting, consecutive meetings of the First Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Committees will be held in the Hall to elect their respective Bureau members.

I wish to remind members that after the election of the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees, the General Committee of the General Assembly for the seventy-second session will then be fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.